

Will e-working suit me?

When considering e-working, an employee will need to examine their preferred style of working, learning and socialising in order to assess their suitability for this change in working environment

Before e-working can commence, the employee needs to consider if they have the skills and the personal qualities to work effectively outside the usual office structures. To do this they need to examine their preferred style of working, learning and socialising, as well as looking at skills such as communications skills, decision making, time management and self discipline. The broader impact of e-working on family and career must also be considered.

The following is intended as a guide to help employees think around these issues and to assist in identifying where they and their managers may need to make adjustments in order to successfully e-work.

The employees must ask themselves:

- *How do they view the flexibility of e-working? They will be required to be available to work at certain times and to attend meetings in the office. It will be critical to the success of e-working that they be available as agreed.*
- *How do they like to work? Mainly through interaction with others to get solutions, or through individual research?*
- *How do they prefer to approach improving their skills? Through self managed training or learning from other members of the team?*
- *Will there be a need for more self sufficiency on IT issues? How will they manage without ready access to colleagues for solutions to minor problems?*
- *Once they are e-working the main means of communication at work will be e-mail and phone; will they need to adapt their communications style?*
- *How organised are they? Can they always find that document?*
- *Do they have suitable, secure office space in the home that is of a standard acceptable to their organisation?*
- *If they are not the homeowner, will they need to check if it is okay to e-work from that location?*
- *Will they have to consider doing a refresher course in time management before they start e-working?*

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- *e-workers tend to work longer hours – will they have the self-discipline to address this?*
- *e-working will increase the need to trust your own judgement – do both employee and manager have confidence in their decision making skills?*
- *Resentment from colleagues can be an issue: have they discussed with their manager how they are both going to deal with it?*
- *They must consider if e-working is likely to impact negatively on their career path. Does this matter to them now? What about in the future?*
- *They may have to deal with interruptions, e.g. neighbours or younger children. Have they ensured the correct message is given?*
- *e-working can give rise to unexpected reactions; have they discussed the expectations of their family, friends, or housemates?*
- *What do they plan to do with their extra time?*

The employee must also give thought to their ability to deal with the isolation of e-working, and the resulting change in their social environment. Talking to a colleague or friend who is already e-working will provide a valuable insight into the potential benefits and drawbacks.

By taking time to consider these issues both the employee and the manager are more likely to have a positive experience of e-working.



“ I just know of so many women who found themselves having to give up work when they had children or when the children went to school because of the need to deal with the school runs, and the football runs and that sort of thing.

I certainly would have had to cut back substantially. I prepared a proposal and presented it to my employers and they were very, very co-operative.

When I returned to work we put it in place and it's been fantastic. It really has ”

Melanie Cambell
Investigator, Office of the
Information Commissioner